

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 301502
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 301502

NODIS

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM PRETORIA DATED DECEMBER 19,
1977 SENT SECSTATE WASHDC IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

S E C R E T PRETORIA 6912

NODIS

PLEASE PASS WHITE HOUSE FOR BRZEZINSKI

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MNUC, PARM, SF
SUBJECT: NEXT STEPS ON SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM

REF: STATE 299374

1. IN VIEW OF THE NEW FEATURES IN THE U.S. APPROACH THAT
WILL HAVE TO BE CONVEYED ACCURATELY TO TECHNICALLY
QUALIFIED SAG OFFICIALS, I AGREE THAT IT WOULD BE MOST
DESIRABLE TO DO SO BY MEANS OF OPTION 3, I.E., A SMALL
TECHNICAL TEAM TO COME TO PRETORIA.

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2. I BELIEVE SAG WOULD COOPERATE IN AVOIDING PUBLICITY.
THEIR INTEREST TO OBTAIN FUEL OVERRIDES TEMPTATION TO MAKE
POLITICAL HAY OF TEAM VISIT. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE,
SAG'S RECORD IN SUCCESSFULLY KEEPING WRAPS ON SUCH VISITS
WHEN IT WANTS TO IS RATHER GOOD. HENCE, WE REGARD
RISKS OF DISCLOSURE OF VISIT FROM THIS END AS ACCEPTABLY
LOW. NEVERTHELESS, IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO PLAN

WHAT WE WOULD SAY IF NEWS OF THE VISIT LEAKS OUT. I SUGGEST WE OFFER THE EXPLANATION THAT IN THE CONTINUING SA-U.S. EXCHANGES ON THE NUCLEAR PROBLEM, I HAVE HAD TO CALL ON SPECIALISTS FROM THE U.S. TO HELP WITH CERTAIN TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS. SINCE IT SHOULD BE EVIDENT FROM VARIOUS COMMENTS MADE BY BOTH SIDES THAT WE HAVE BEEN HOLDING SUCH EXCHANGES, THE VISIT OF THE TEAM WILL NOT NECESSARILY GENERATE UNDUE ATTENTION, AT LEAST HERE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

3. SIZE OF TEAM PROPOSED PARA 6 REFTEL SEEMS APPROPRIATE AS DOES BACKGROUND OF MEMBERS. TO AID IN DOWN-PLAYING SIGNIFICANCE, WOULD BE BETTER IF DEPARTMENT POLITICAL OFFICER WERE BELOW DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LEVEL.

4. BECAUSE THIS IS PEAK HOLIDAY SEASON AND MOST TOP OFFICIALS ARE ALREADY OUT OF TOWN, I AM NOT SURE WE CAN GET AN IMMEDIATE APPROVAL FROM SAG TO THE TEAM'S VISIT. FOR SAME REASON, IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO GET TALKS UNDERWAY BEFORE JANUARY 9, WHEN OFFICIALS RETURN TO THEIR OFFICES. KEY FIGURES IN THIS EXERCISE WILL BE BRAND FOURIE AND AEB HEAD DR. ROUX. BOTH OUT OF TOWN BUT WE WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO GET THEM TO AGREE TO TALKS ON DATE INDICATED.

5. ALTHOUGH I RECOGNIZE IMPORTANCE OF SECURING PROMPT SECRET

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RESOLUTION OF NUCLEAR ISSUES, IT MAY PROVE OPTIMISTIC TO EXPECT THE NECESSARY POLITICAL DECISIONS BY SAG WITHIN ONE TO TWO WEEKS AFTER TEAM VISIT. ASSUMING IT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY TO HAVE FURTHER EXCHANGES TO CLEAR UP CERTAIN POINTS AFTER DEPARTURE OF TEAM, CAUTIOUS BUREAUCRACY WILL WANT TO ANALYZE NEW AMERICAN PROPOSALS CAREFULLY BEFORE MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS TO TOP POLICY MAKERS. FURTHERMORE, THE PROCESS WILL BE COMPLICATED BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND KEY CABINET MINISTERS BEING HEAVILY ENGAGED IN MAKING PREPARATIONS FOR PARLIAMENTARY SESSION WHICH OPENS JANUARY 27. DEVELOPING LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM AND ORGANIZING NATIONAL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS HOLDS SPECIAL PROBLEMS FOR LEADERSHIP BECAUSE OF INCREMENT AND DIVERSITY GOVERNMENT MAJORITY.

6. I WOULD HOPE THAT VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA BY AMBASSADOR SMITH COULD BE AVOIDED, BUT WE CANNOT BE SURE UNTIL WE HOLD TALKS WITH SAG. THE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE MORE INTERESTED IN GETTING THE FUEL FOR SAFARI I AND KOEBERG THAN THEY ARE IN THE MECHANICS. IF OUR PROPOSALS ARE ACCEPTABLE, I DO NOT THINK THEY WILL INSIST ON AMBASSADOR SMITH COMING HERE. WE SHOULD HOLD A POSSIBLE MEETING IN VIENNA

ON FEBRUARY 21-22 AS FALLBACK IN THE EVENT A HITCH
DEVELOPS REQUIRING HIS PERSONAL PARTICIPATION.

7. PLEASE ADVISE SOONEST ON PLANS FOR TEAM VISIT SO
I CAN TRY TO SECURE SAG AGREEMENT WHILE SOME
OFFICIALS ARE STILL AVAILABLE IN PRETORIA. BOWDLER
UNQUOTE VANCE

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